

## I. INTRODUCTION

The *Guidance for 2006 Assessment, Listing and Reporting Requirements Pursuant to Sections 303(d), 305(b) and 314 of the Clean Water Act* was developed specifically for the 2006 reporting cycle. The objective of this document is to provide to states, territories, authorized tribes, and interstate commissions<sup>1</sup> a recommended reporting format and a suggested content to be used in developing a single document that integrates the reporting requirements of the Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) and section 305(b). This guidance for developing the Integrated Report (IR) supports the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) strategy for achieving a broad-scale, national inventory of water quality conditions. Use of the IR format will serve to report on water quality standards (WQS) attainment status of assessed waters, document availability of data and information for each segment, identify trends in water quality conditions, and provide information to managers in setting priorities for future actions to protect and restore the health of our nation's aquatic resources.

EPA has established a goal that all fifty-six states and territories utilize the integrated reporting format by 2008. EPA continues to promote this comprehensive assessment approach in order to enhance the states' ability to track both programmatic and environmental goals of the CWA, and ideally, to increase the pace of achieving these important environmental goals. This document includes recommendations designed to allow states and other interested stakeholders to track the progress of interim management actions by employing the multi-category reporting framework. By issuing this guidance well in advance of the April 1, 2006 deadline for submission of CWA section 303(d) lists and section 305(b) reports, EPA intends to encourage the broadest possible adoption of the integrated reporting approach.

EPA continues to advocate the use of the five-part categorization format for sorting waters (see box below for brief description and Section V). While this document is more comprehensive than previous Integrated Report Guidance, there are clarifications to the previous (2004) Integrated Report Guidance. Specifically, this guidance provides:

- increased emphasis on the use of the Assessment Database (ADB) or compatible electronic data format (the ADB is being modified to accommodate the recent format, content, and multi-category listing option that the guidance suggests),
- greater clarity on the content and the format of those components of the IR that are recommended and required under CWA sections 303(d), 305(b), and 314,
- greater clarity on issues associated with data solicitation, collection, consideration, and interpretation of water quality standards,
- additional information on the option to report water quality status of individual segments in more than one category (e.g., to show that some designated uses of a water are being attained and some designated uses are not),<sup>2</sup> and
- additional clarity and flexibility on undertaking and reporting alternatives to total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for attaining water quality standards (e.g., utilization of reporting "Category 4b").

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<sup>1</sup> In the remainder of this document, unless specified otherwise, *states* also refers to authorized tribes, territories and interstates commissions.

<sup>2</sup> In this guidance document EPA refers to "designated uses" as the basis and unit for reporting water quality, although note that states determine their section 303(d) list (i.e., Category 5) consistent with 40 CFR 130.7 (b)(3).

It is important to note that certain components of the recommended format and content for the 2006 IR document are based on requirements of the CWA and EPA's implementing regulations (e.g., the submission of an approvable section 303(d) list), whereas other components are based on Agency recommendations. In section II of this guidance, those components *required* by the CWA sections 303(d), 305(b), 314, and the corresponding regulations are identified.

In addition to identifying the required components in the 2006 IR submission, this guidance will indicate the components of the 2006 IR document for which EPA recommends states provide an opportunity for *public review and comment* (e.g., the list of impaired waters requiring TMDLs and the assessment methodology used by the state to develop their IR document).

#### **Five Reporting Categories**

- Category 1: All designated uses are supported, no use is threatened;
- Category 2: Available data and/or information indicate that some, but not all of the designated uses are supported;
- Category 3: There is insufficient available data and/or information to make a use support determination;
- Category 4: Available data and/or information indicate that at least one designated use is not being supported or is threatened, but a TMDL is not needed;
- Category 5: Available data and/or information indicate that at least one designated use is not being supported or is threatened, and a TMDL is needed.

**Integrated Monitoring and Assessment**

The Clean Water Act requires states to provide every two years an assessment of the quality of all their waters (section 305(b)) and a list of those that are impaired or threatened (section 303(d)). To efficiently meet this charge, EPA recommends that states, tribes, and other water quality monitoring collaborators use a combination of monitoring and assessment techniques to:

1. increase the percentage and types of waters assessed;
2. reliably estimate the overall condition of all waters within a state; assess changes over time; and measure progress toward the “fishable-swimmable” goal of the Clean Water Act (section 305(b));
3. comprehensively identify all impaired and threatened waters to support section 303(d) listing requirements; and
4. prioritize site-specific assessments needed to confirm the location of both high quality and impaired waters, and support control, restoration, and prevention actions.

EPA has strongly encouraged states to use integrated monitoring and assessment techniques. These include probability-based assessments and other predictive tools, as well as site-specific assessments. The use of probability assessments can eliminate the risk of generating a biased picture of water quality conditions state-wide and provide a cost-effective bench mark of state water quality program effectiveness. The probability-based assessment results can also help a state decide if it should target certain waters for further assessment or if limited resources for water quality assessment could be used more effectively in other ways. States currently using broad-scale probability-based assessment to complement their site-specific assessment include VA, SC, KY, and IN, among others.